

Geronimos out shoot assassins

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Jeff Troth

Soldiers of Task Force 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment were victorious in their first armed contact in Afghanistan. While on their way to conduct a village assessment paratroopers from Company C and Detachment D shot and killed four individuals along the highway west of Khowst.

The Soldiers were heading west on the highway and passing some buildings when 2nd Lt. Douglas Peterson, 3rd platoon leader, noticed Afghans on the side of the road signaling. When the five-vehicle

convoy came to a halt the lieutenant noticed a car across the wadi from his position. Outside the car were two men, one on the ground apparently hurt.

"My first thought was that it was an ambush, the old person-injured trick," said Peterson. "When you stop to assist they open fire from the side of the road."

The rest of the convoy thought the same thing and quickly scanned the area for any possible threat. Four armed males were spotted laying on the north side of the road. The Afghanistan Militia Forces' soldier, who was with Co. C for their mis-

sion, opened fire.

When the four men fired back, the Geronimos returned fire with devastating results. All four of the opposition soon lay motionless on the ground.

As the paratroopers moved in to secure the area, one of their attackers threw a hand grenade. As the task force mem-

bers quickly got out of the blast radius, a well-placed shot ensured that the man was no longer a threat.

According to Staff Sgt. Christopher Clark, 3rd squad leader, his guys reacted to the situation just like they should have.

"They did everything right," Clark said. "If we could have rehearsed a contact situ-

ation like this, I would have wanted them to do it just like they did on the side of that highway."

"The reason they responded the way they did is because of the training that Staff Sgt. Clark has given them," Peterson said.

That training not only helped to keep the Geronimos unhurt in the attack, but it also helped save lives of Afghans. What had looked like a possible ambush, was

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Sgt. Joe Parmley, an engineer with HQ Company, inventories weapons of war found during the search of a house.



Pfc. Tommy Daw, Company C, pulls security for other task force members as they search an Afghanistan village.

Salerno Happenings

Mart Attire

Many residents of FOB Salerno have been seen at the North Gate mart out of uniform. The mart is not a secure area, and the proper uniform for all personnel, regardless of service, going there is full battle rattle. This means wearing your Kevlar, body armor, LBE (or equivalent) and weapon. Those in violation of this policy will be sent to see the task force command sergeant major.

Mail Zip Code

Ensure that your family and friends are using the 09354 zip code. Mail is still arriving in theater with 09355. This mail is going to Kandahar, where there is limited planes and even more limited pallet space heading to Salerno. This means mail could take an additional month to arrive.

The World

Robber Uses Bikini Top To Hide Face

A man wearing a bikini top to disguise his face robbed the Northrim Bank in Anchorage on Monday. The man was described as white, about 5-feet, 10-inches to 6 feet tall with a heavy build, and he appeared to be in his late 20s to early 30s. He wore a baseball cap, a neon green and blue bikini top across his face, a gray sweatshirt, jeans and workman gloves.

Man Rescued After Six Days

Iranian rescue workers found a 27-year-old man alive but in a daze, six days after an earthquake destroyed the ancient city of Bam. Red Crescent workers initially thought Yadollah Saadat was among the dead as they dug through the rubble of a house in Bam, but found him blinking and mumbling. He was trapped under a wardrobe, which probably saved his life from falling debris. Death toll at 28,000.

K-1 Veteran Sapp is Popular in Japan

Former sumo wrestler Akebono didn't last long in his K-1 debut against Bob Sapp. Sapp, a former NFL lineman with the Minnesota Vikings, used a left-right combination to floor the massive Hawaiian-born wrestler in the waning seconds of the first round in the three-round bout before 43,500 at Nagoya Dome. "Tyson, you're next," Sapp said after the bout. "It's been a year of challenges. Akebono accepted the challenge and now it's your turn." K-1 organizers are looking to tap into the lucrative American market and have signed Mike Tyson, but no fights involving the former heavyweight have been confirmed.

FOB faces

What will you remember most about 2003?



The war in Iraq and my deployment to Afghanistan.
Sgt. Donald Taylor
45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance)

Being pulled from 4-123 AVN to go to Afghanistan with TF 1-501..

Pvt. Joshna Atkisson
Forward Support Company



What I will remember the most about 2003, is that it is over and the support of my wife.
Spec. Michael Jandzinski
HQ Company

My son's first day of kindergarten. Being home between two deployments and being able to walk him to school.
Sgt. First Class Mark Allen
Company B



NCO receives Soldier's Medal for BAF minefield rescue

By Pfc. Ryan Smith

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — A Soldier with the 27th Engineer Battalion was awarded the Soldier's Medal at Fort Bragg, N.C., Dec. 18 for his actions in Afghanistan.

Staff Sgt. Scott Smullen, while serving as a squad leader in C Company, 27th Engineer Battalion, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, risked his life to save an injured Soldier and was presented the award by Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg commander.

"Our platoon was conducting mine-clearance operations at Bagram Air Base," Smullen said. "We cleared safe lanes for further mine-clearing operations to be conducted. We use titanium probes - we push them into the ground and feel for land mines."

During the April 21 operation, one of the Soldiers, Sgt. Camilo Molina,

was injured in an explosion.

"While we were clearing the lanes, (Molina) stepped on a mine and blew his left foot off," Smullen said.

"We were all pretty close to the area, so me and my team leader ran over there and started clearing a safe area up to him," he said. "The first thing we did was make sure he was conscious. He was a little disoriented, of course. My team leader Sgt. (George) Day and I took our belts off and threw them to him - he was about 10 meters away - and instructed him to apply them as tourniquets."

Day said that thanks to the training the platoon had received, the rescue went smoothly.

"All the training we did for casualty evacuation and how to probe a minefield really came into play. It flowed like clockwork," Day said. "Everybody just came together."



Staff Sgt. Scott Smullen receives the Soldier's Medal from Lt. Gen. John R. Vines for his actions in Afghanistan.

1st Lt. Joshua Finley, Smullen's platoon leader at the time, said that Smullen definitely earned his award.

"(The Soldier's Medal) is outstanding recognition for what (Smullen) did," Finley said. "I saw it with my own eyes, and it really was an act of heroism. He really deserves this award."

Finley said that Smullen and the other Soldiers involved in the rescue reacted quickly and efficiently because they had rehearsed similar scenarios before.

"We went through a lot of training once we were in-theater, learning how to do a mine-field check. Then we'd practice it and practice it," he said. "When it actually happens, you just go on autopilot; everything shuts off and you just do it."

Smullen said that he was surprised to receive the Soldier's Medal for his actions that day.

"(Getting the medal) is kind of surreal. It's unexpected, and sometimes I think it's unwarranted - I think the whole platoon deserves the recognition," Smullen said.

"We all just worked and executed what we were trained to do. It was a group effort - the whole platoon pulled together that day. The whole platoon saved (Molina's) life," said Smullen.



Smiling staff sergeants

Company A squad leaders Staff Sgts. Leslie Posey (left to right), Benjamin Loggins and Dale McDonald got a break from duty at FOB Salerno with a four-day R&R trip to Qatar. Their smiles are not just because they are on vacation, but each one of them netted a \$10,000 tax-free bonus for re-enlisting.

Photo by Sgt. First Class Ned Longoria

He's no Santa Clause, but ...

Army chief of staff brings holiday cheer

By Staff Sgt. Keith Thompson
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — He doesn't wear a red suit or fly in a sleigh, but the Army Chief of Staff spent Christmas day spreading good cheer to the Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan.

Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker culminated a holiday trip overseas by spending Christmas flying to various locations in Afghanistan letting troops know that their holiday spent away from family members wasn't unappreciated.

"You're giving the best Christmas gift you could give to your country — your service," said Schoomaker.

Schoomaker, along with Rep. James Marshall (D), Ga., and Brig. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, Combined Joint Task Force 180 commander, started their holiday tour when they arrived from visiting troops in Iraq on Christmas Eve in time to attend church services at Bagram Air Base.

Christmas morning saw the Army's top officer flying to Kandahar Air Field to visit troops from 10th

Mountain Division's Warrior Brigade.

The general's party then boarded Black Hawk helicopters for a whirlwind tour of Orgun-E Firebase, Shkin Firebase and finally Forward Operating Base Salerno.

While at the FOB the generals and con-

gressman toured the base, taking the time to meet the Soldiers of the task force. For many this was a once in a life-time opportunity to get their picture taken with the top Army Soldier.

Schoomaker, Marshall and Austin spent the day wishing Soldiers a "Merry Christmas" and praise for the "great job you're doing."

"You won't do anything more sig-

nificant in your life than what you're doing right now," said Marshall, a Vietnam veteran.

The holiday well-wishers ate Christmas dinner, and breakfast the next day, with the Soldiers, Airmen and Marines of Task Force 1-501st PIR. They then capped off their visit with an early morning visit to the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team before returning to Bagram.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Troth

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker shakes hands with Sgt. First Class Taras Lapka and wishes him and Sgt. David Moore a happy holiday during Christmas dinner.



2nd Lt. Huck Finn strikes up a conversation with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker. Pfc. Bryan Murphy sits to the general's right during the Christmas dinner at Forward Operating Base Salerno.



The distinguished visitors take time out to pose for pictures with Battery E, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment.

Christmas, Salerno-style



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Troth

ABOVE: Task Force members, led by Chap. (Capt.) Brad Lee on keyboard, braved the cold to spread Christmas cheer to those manning the checkpoints around Forward Operating Base Salerno. LEFT: Soldiers on guard duty smile in appreciation of the Christmas carols sung to them by their fellow Geronimos.

Afghani Jingle Bells

By Chaplain (Capt.) Brad Lee

*Dashing through the sand,
in a dry and barren land,
loaded in a truck, in search of Taliban.
Back at the FOB,
guarding at my OP,
I want to shoot my M-16,
but all I seem to see is:
Jingle trucks,
that's my luck,
I never get to fire.
All I get to do is sit and guard this
stupid wire.
RPG's,
IED's,
hey, where is my mail?
Osama when we find you we will send
you straight to hell.*



Task Force members dine on all the Christmas fixins.



Soldiers, Airmen and Marines of Task Force 1-501st PIR spent their Christmas morning running around FOB Salerno. As the flyer advertising the 5-K run stated what else did they have to do. Spc. Kevin Walters, Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 6 Field Artillery, 10th Infantry Division (Mountain), won the individual race. Paratroopers from Company C ran away with the team trophy. The team consisted of Sgt. Michael Iozzo, Sgt. Robert Carpenter, Spc. David Barber, Spc. Samuel Culliton and Pfc. John Shannon.





Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Troth

ABOVE: Soldiers at FOB Salerno line up for an early Christmas gift when the AAFES exchange opened for business Dec. 24. LEFT: Soldiers scan the shelves for items to purchase. The store is open from 0730 to 1130 hours zulu, Tuesday through Saturday. Because the store is run by Geronimo personnel all purchases are cash only. If the store does not have what you want, a suggestion box is available at the front of the store. Special requests can be made for items from the Bagram store, if in stock at BAF these items will take 2-3 weeks for delivery.

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actually an assassination.

Minutes prior to the convoy reaching the wadi, the four men had opened fire on the car that Peterson had noticed. Their bullets had ripped through the door and passed through the driver and his seat. The driver who died was the assistant of police security for the area.

The other man who was kneeling near the dead police officer when the convoy arrived worked for an Afghanistan government official. Peterson said that he had no "doubt that he would have died if we hadn't rolled up when we did."

The assassins just picked the wrong time and place to carry out their mission.

The Afghans in the area said that they did not recognize the four attackers, but thought they might have come from one of the villages to the north of the as-

sassination site.

To ensure that there was no other threat in the area the task force sent elements of Co. C and Co. B out the following day to saturate the area with U.S. presence. The companies started at opposite ends of the valley where the attackers might have come from and searched the villages for weapons of war and information on the al Queda.

"The people in the villages where we searched were cooperative for the most part," said 2nd Lt. Huck Finn, 1st platoon leader, Co. C. "They told us that we were making their town safe."

The two days netted the task force, several thousand rounds of ammo, hand grenades, pistols and an RPG. The information garnered from the two days was priceless.

"The information we got will help us to track down where the enemy is," said Capt. William Kilgore, task force intelligence officer. "It tells us a lot about what the enemy is thinking, planning and doing."

"On the way back to Salerno we got more waves and thumbs up than we normally do," said Clark.

"For 30 years these people have seen people being killed and nothing being done about



Capt. Brent Morrow, Detachment D commander, uses an interpreter to inform an Afghani why the U.S. Soldiers are in his town, what they are looking for and how he can help assist in making his country safer.

it," said Peterson. "This time there was immediate justice for them."

SOME HIDDEN GEMS

By Chaplain (Col.)
Robert Ippolito

Buried among the major movies that have recently been released in the United States are three rather obscure ones that have received Golden Globe nominations. The Golden Globes are the precursors to the Oscar nominations which are released on Jan 29.

Girl With the Pearl Earring

This movie takes place in Delft, The Netherlands in 1655 and is about the famous Dutch artist Jan Vermeer. A 16 year old Dutch girl named Griet (Scarlett Johansson) becomes a maid in the house of Jan Vermeer. Though she is a shy, simple, poor girl and he's an educated respected artist, the two get along, and soon she becomes the subject of his paintings. Johansson received the GG nom for best actress and it is well deserved. This movie tells much about relationships without a lot of dialogue.

House of Sand and Fog

Ben Kingsley received a GG nom for best actor and seems a sure bet for an Oscar nod as well. One critic has labeled this movie as the "performance of a lifetime" for Kingsley. He plays the part of an ex-Colonel in the army of the Shah of Iran who has immigrated to the U.S. Despite pretense of continued affluence, he is barely making ends meet until he sees his opportunity in the auction of a



house being sold for back taxes. Through a bureaucratic snafu, the house has been improperly seized from its rightful owner Kathy (Jennifer Connelly). The loss of her home tears away her last hope of a stable life and she decides to fight for her home at all costs. A powerful performance by all!

Big Fish

Albert Finney received a GG nom for best actor in this film which deals with a fabled relationship between a father and his son. Edward Bloom (Finney) has always been a teller of tall tales about his oversized life as a young man. His mythic exploits dart from the delightful to the delirious as he weaves his tall tales. Bloom charms almost everyone he encounters except for his estranged son Will (Billy Crudup). Will must learn to separate fact from fiction as he comes to terms with his father's great feats and great failings.

Caveat: While you may purchase these films from the local market, you should leave them here as it is illegal to import them to the USA.

ODE TO THE FOB

By Staff Sgt. Jay Schulz

*You are my home for the next six months,
Oh wait, no make that nine.
There are so many things I dislike about you,
But it does no good to whine.*

*Like the fact that I have to travel your entire length
Just to use the latrine.
Or having no hot water EVER
To keep my skin pristine.*

*The same 3 T-rations over and over
And the over cooked meat.
Makes me wonder if it's worth stumbling in the dark
To the mess hall, to get a bite to eat.*

*Five gallons of fuel is never enough
To last through the entire night.
And seldom getting mail here
Because they cancelled the flight.*

*But, alas you are my home
And so I grow to love
The hosed walls around me
And the J-lens looking around above.*

*I tolerate your inadequacies
For I know it could be much worse.
I could be serving in Iraq
And dealing with that curse.*

*So until I get to go back to Ft. Rich
And see my family
I will stumble in the dark
So that I can go and pee.*



ASK MSG NORDSTROM

If you have a question for MSG Nordstrom, drop it off at the ALOC.

soldiers have to complain but come on, give me break. I think its pretty good considering that we are in a combat zone in a third world country. My only complaint is that there are NO Jewel cigars!
MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,
Why are so many people getting sick? Have you ever seen an epidemic like this before?
Signed,
1SG Down for the Count

Dear MSG Nordstrom,
Why do we have guards on the latrines again? I thought everyone had learned their lesson about cleaning up after themselves.
Yours Truly,
Troubled Private

Dear 1SG C,
Epidemic? Now the black plague – that was an epidemic. I recommend we start by burning all the infested tents and clothing. Also, a cigar a day keeps the illnesses at bay!
MSG N

Dear TP,
We wouldn't need guard on the latrines if you and your fellow task force members would learn a little consideration for others and clean up after themselves. Maybe a week or two of no flushies and having to use a slit trench here at the FOB will make everyone a little bit appreciative of what they have.
MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,
I just visited the new Salerno PX and wanted to know why they aren't carrying DVDs, CDs, T-shirts, hygiene products, etc. I mean, what kind of a PX is this?
Signed,
SSG Whine-Alot

Dear MSG Nordstrom,
I noticed, while walking around the FOB, that there are A LOT of exposed and low hanging wires. I was wondering if you could convince the commo guys to stop chasing their pipe dream of being Salerno volley-

Dear Wh-A,
Are you an aviator? You've got to be kidding, right? I mean, I know

ball champs (NO CHANCE!) and fix the wires instead.

Sincerely,
Can You Hear Me Now?

Dear CYHMN,
Roger, will pass on the message if I see one of them. Hey, there's one . . . damn, into his hole again. Wait, there's another . . . shoot, gone again. Will keep trying to find a commo guy – would have better luck snipe hunting.
MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,
Why is there such a long line at the MWR tent to use the phones and internet?
Signed,
Busy Signal

Dear BS,
Let me repeat it one more time
CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.
You're sitting in that long line because your "buddies" don't know how to tell time. Fifteen minutes in Afghanistan is the same as 15 minutes in the rest of the world. And that doesn't mean 15 minutes for each of the five calls you are making. That is 15 minutes total.
Just be glad that there are phones to call home. During the big WW II we had to resort to the outdated paper and pen to communicate with loved ones.
MSG N

C	A	H	G	I	C	A	P	I	T	A	L	O	N	E
O	A	L	A	M	M	A	S	P	E	A	C	H	A	A
T	A	R	A	N	A	N	A	C	N	G	E	S	R	C
T	L	C	I	M	U	C	E	K	O	N	I	E	C	N
O	I	A	E	A	O	S	C	T	I	N	Y	C	R	A
N	E	I	S	N	A	A	C	R	M	E	E	N	B	I
H	Y	M	A	V	B	T	E	A	G	W	A	E	R	R
A	T	O	E	T	E	G	U	N	A	O	D	D	G	A
W	R	T	U	T	N	G	A	O	A	R	G	N	I	T
A	E	O	E	A	A	R	A	G	A	L	H	E	F	I
I	B	R	T	R	O	O	A	S	U	E	S	P	I	N
I	I	C	O	A	R	A	G	S	O	A	T	E	E	A
A	L	I	A	U	G	A	A	E	R	N	M	D	S	M
N	O	T	R	A	G	U	S	U	C	S	M	N	T	U
A	R	Y	A	R	O	S	E	L	T	G	T	I	A	H

Bowl Games

How many of the following bowl games can you locate in the puzzle?

ALAMO
CAPITALONE
COTTON
FIESTA
GATOR
GMAC
HAWAIIAN
HUMANITARIAN
INDEPENDENCE
LAS VEGAS

LIBERTY
MOTOR CITY
NEW ORLEANS
ORANGE
OUTBACK
PEACH
ROSE
SUGAR
SUN
TANGERINE